



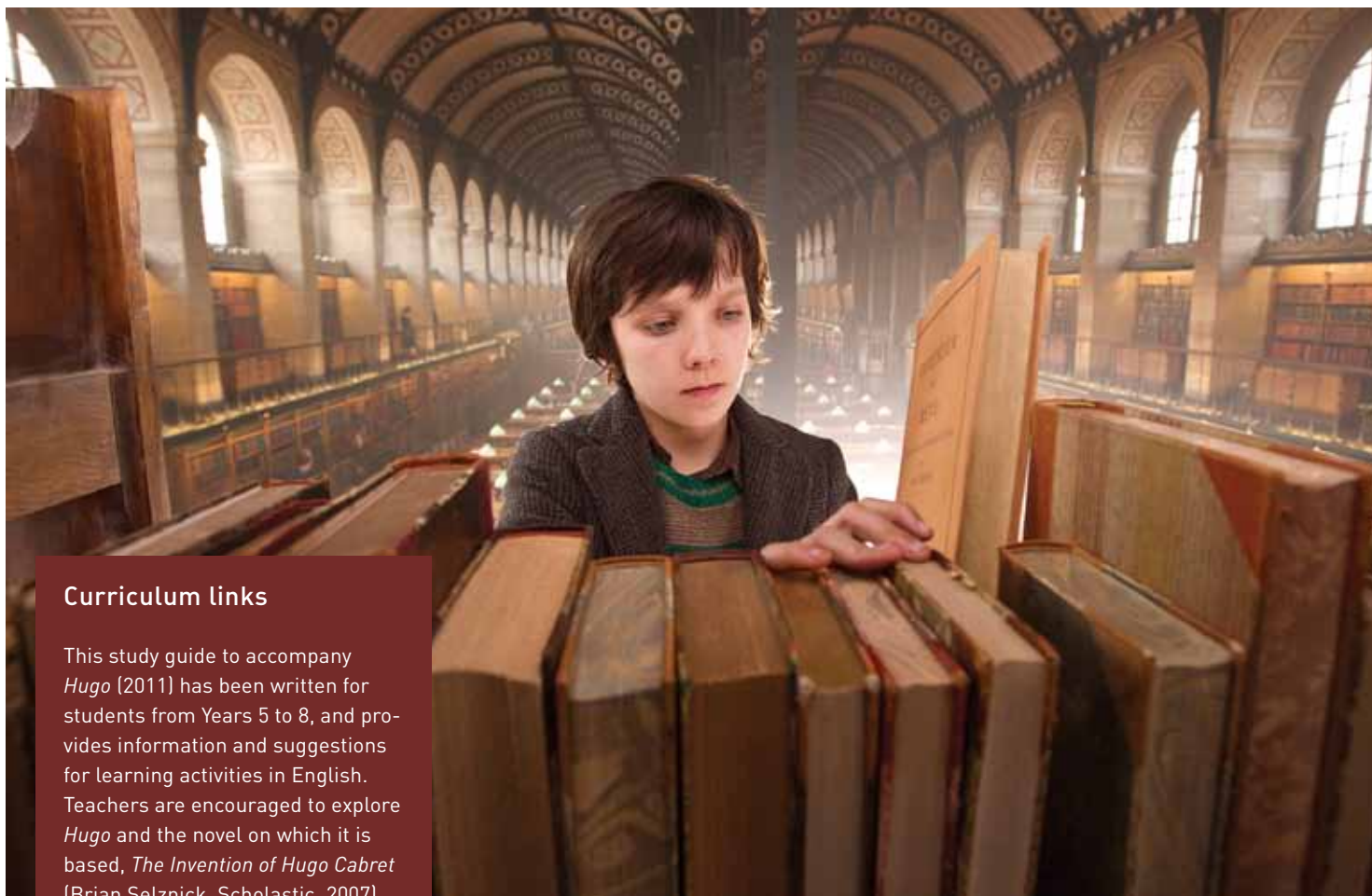
Mechanical Maggi

A Hugo Study Guide



ISABELLE (CHLOË GRACE MORETZ) HELPS HUGO (ASA BUTTERFIELD) WIND THE RAILWAY STATION CLOCKS

In Hugo, Martin Scorsese's first film aimed at children, twelve-year-old orphan Hugo Cabret is in search of a message from his father, and his quest leads him to discover his purpose in life. Hugo is also a movie about movies, and in telling the story of Georges Méliès, Scorsese pays tribute to the pioneers of cinema. KATY MARRINER looks at the ways in which this intertextual film can be used in late primary and early secondary classrooms.



Curriculum links

This study guide to accompany *Hugo* (2011) has been written for students from Years 5 to 8, and provides information and suggestions for learning activities in English. Teachers are encouraged to explore *Hugo* and the novel on which it is based, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Brian Selznick, Scholastic, 2007).

In completing the tasks, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- respond to a text by identifying personal ideas, experiences and opinions and discussing them with others;
- examine a text by analysing and explaining the ways in which stories, characters, settings and experiences are reflected and by appraising the ways language, literary techniques and devices are used to influence readers; and
- use personal knowledge and a text as a starting point to create other texts that convey meaning, address significant issues and generate engagement and impact.

Hugo is also a relevant resource to promote interdisciplinary learning across the domains of English, Arts, Humanities – History, and Design, Creativity and Technology.

Hugo is rated PG and has a running time of 126 minutes.

The story

When twelve-year-old Hugo Cabret's (Asa Butterfield) father dies in a fire, Hugo must go to live with his drunkard uncle, Claude (Ray Winstone), who winds the clocks at a busy Paris train station. But Uncle Claude disappears, and so Hugo is forced to survive on pilfered croissants and milk from the station café. He keeps the clocks running to time, and does his best to avoid the clutches of the overzealous Station Inspector (Sacha Baron Cohen), who catches orphans that roam the station and dispatches them to orphanages as if they are criminals in need of incarceration.

Hugo takes mechanical parts from Papa Georges (Ben Kingsley), a cantankerous shopkeeper who runs a toy booth, in order to fix the automaton that he has inherited from his father. His father's dream was to restore the automaton to working order and Hugo is intent on finishing this work. When the shopkeeper confiscates the notebook filled with his father's sketches, Hugo is devastated. He needs the notebook as much as he needs to find the heart-shaped key that will bring the automaton to life.

Isabelle (Chloë Grace Moretz) is the adventure-seeking goddaughter of the shopkeeper. She befriends Hugo when he appeals to her for help retrieving his precious notebook. Isabelle reassures him that Papa Georges has not burnt his notebook and that in time it will be returned. Hugo introduces Isabelle to the wonders of the movies, a pastime forbidden by Papa Georges. In return, Isabelle takes Hugo to visit Monsieur Labisse (Christopher Lee), who runs the bookshop at the train station, and awakens Hugo's interest in books.

When Isabelle falls down at the crowded train station and is in danger of being crushed beneath the feet of rushing commuters, Hugo rescues her. In so doing, he discovers that Isabelle wears the heart-shaped key on a chain around her neck. When Hugo shows Isabelle the automaton, she is confounded: 'Why would my key fit into your father's machine?'

As the automaton jolts into action, it draws an image that Hugo recognises: the picture of a space rocket hitting the moon in the eye, a scene from his father's favourite film. Isabelle recognises the automaton's signature as that



LEFT: HUGO DISCOVERS PAPA GEORGES' ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CINEMA; ABOVE: ISABELLE PROVIDES FRIENDSHIP TO THE LONELY HUGO

of Papa Georges. Believing the drawing to be a message from his father, Hugo is even more determined to retrieve his notebook from wherever it is hidden in Papa Georges' house. The children's discovery of an armoire filled with drawings takes them one step closer to unravelling the mystery that Georges would rather have remain a secret.

Papa Georges, it turns out, is the famous filmmaker Georges Méliès. Hugo and Isabelle discover his spectacular past during a visit to the Film Academy Library. There they meet film historian Professor Rene Tabard (Michael Stuhlbarg), who believes Méliès was killed in the war. Isabelle confirms that her godfather is very much alive, and tells Professor Tabard that he is welcome to visit Georges at home.

When Tabard visits, he brings a projector and a copy of one of Georges' films. Mama Jeanne (Helen McCrory) is about to turn Tabard away but his praise of her husband's work brings about a change of heart and the screening begins. Georges unexpectedly arrives in the room, and the sound of the projector and the realisation that some of his work has survived lifts

his spirits. He is ready to remember the past without bitterness, and he shares the story of his glory days as a filmmaker with Tabard and the children. When Hugo discloses that he is in possession of Georges' precious automaton, a happy ending – just like in the movies – seems possible.

Georges Méliès (1861–1938)

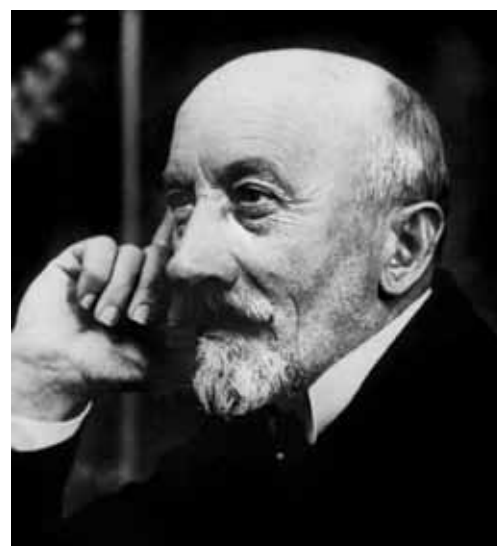
Hugo offers a mostly factual account of the life of the Parisian magician and filmmaker Georges Méliès.

Georges Méliès' decision to become a magician, rather than run his father's shoemaking factory, saw him purchase the Théâtre Robert-Houdin in 1888 and begin performing. His interest in cinema was prompted by the first screening of the Lumière brothers' films at the Grand Café in Paris on 28 December 1895.

Eager to incorporate the magic of moving pictures into his performances at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, Méliès travelled to London to purchase an Animatograph film projector. Méliès used the Animatograph as the model on which to build a film camera, and in September

1896 patented the Kinétographe Robert-Houdin, a camera-projector Méliès likened to a coffee grinder and machine gun because of the noise that it made. Méliès began shooting his first films; by the end of the year he had founded the Star-Film Company and built Europe's first film studio on his property in Montreuil.

While the Lumière brothers were intent on making documentaries, Méliès' films were fantastic works of fiction. In



FILM PIONEER GEORGES MÉLIÈS



AFTER HIS FATHER DIES AND HIS UNCLE DISAPPEARS, HUGO LIVES A SOLITARY LIFE TENDING TO THE STATION CLOCKS

his films an unsuspecting hotel guest is attacked by giant bed bugs, dancing skeletons vanish when confronted by sword-wielding adventurers, a fisherman is threatened by a giant octopus and a caterpillar transforms into an alluring butterfly woman. Méliès' fantasies offered audiences of the time escapist entertainment.

Today, Méliès is often referred to as the father of special effects. A master of illusion, Méliès used the camera to manipulate reality. His imagination and ingenuity gave rise to cinematic techniques still used today, including stop motion, multiple exposures, dissolves and split screens. He wrote, directed, edited, starred in and marketed his own films. His creative force seemed unstoppable.

Hugo references Méliès' most famous film, *A Trip to the Moon*. Made in 1902, the film's story of space travel lampoons the tales told by Jules Verne and HG Wells. Méliès stars as Professor Barbenfouillis, president of an astronomers' club and leader of an expedition to the moon. The space rocket launched by a chorus line of showgirls lands in the eyeball of the Man in the Moon. Professor Barbenfouillis and his crew of six disembark and explore the moon's surface. Attacked by moon men, the explorers make a hasty retreat to their rocket. *A Trip to the Moon* and Méliès' film *The Impossible Voyage* (1904) are now regarded as two of the most important early science fiction films.

As in *Hugo*, Méliès became the proprietor of a toy booth. Forced into bankruptcy in 1923, he was unable to continue making films. Angered by Pathé's takeover of Star-Films, a despairing Méliès burnt the negatives of his films, as well as most of the sets and costumes. World War I had also played its part in his demise. The Theatre Robert-Houdin was closed in 1914 as a result of the war and the French army confiscated the original prints of Méliès' films in order to salvage their celluloid and silver content.

Méliès remained largely forgotten until 1929 when, thanks to the efforts of Leon Druhot, editor of an influential film journal, and the timely discovery of a cache of Méliès' films, his genius was acknowledged. Méliès was awarded a National Order of the Legion of Honour



HUGO WORKS TIRELESSLY REPAIRING THE AUTOMATON

for his contribution to cinema in 1931. Approximately 200 of Méliès' 500 films still exist – cinema spectacles with the ability to inspire modern filmmakers and entertain new audiences.

Martin Scorsese

Considered one of the most significant directors of his generation, Martin Scorsese has made many classic films, including *Mean Streets* (1973), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980) and *Goodfellas* (1990). *Hugo* (2011) is unlike any other of Scorsese's feature films, which are known for their morally ambiguous exploration of violence, crime, corruption and psychological turmoil.

A childhood spent watching movies with his father in the cinemas of New York's Little Italy fostered Scorsese's love of film. *Hugo* similarly tells the story of a twelve-year-old boy whose fondest memories are trips to the cinema with his father. In interviews promoting the film, Scorsese has acknowledged that *Hugo* will be the first of his films he will show Francesca, his twelve-year-old daughter.

As much as it is a family film, *Hugo* is also an homage to film pioneer Georges Méliès, with Scorsese's role shifting from director to historian, intent on the preservation of cinema's past glories. Like Méliès, Scorsese draws on the cinematic special effects of his time, notably 3D, to tell the story of the early days of filmmaking. Through original footage and loyal recreations, Méliès' genius is honoured.

Scorsese has done much for the preservation of motion picture history. In 1990 Scorsese established The Film Foundation and in 2007 he launched the World Cinema Foundation. The non-profit organisations are dedicated to the restoration and preservation of films from around the world, with resources set aside for the preservation of films from developing countries.



MARTIN SCORSESE ON SET WITH ASA BUTTERFIELD



L-R: HUGO HIDES FROM THE STATION INSPECTOR (SACHA BARON COHEN); HUGO KEEPS THE STATION'S TIME; ISABELLE LOOKS OUT FOR HUGO AT THE STATION

Starting points

While a unit of work on *Hugo* can begin with a class discussion asking students to nominate their favourite scene, decide on their favourite character and identify the message of the film, the following activities can be used to instigate more detailed appraisals of the film as a whole and to prompt analyses of plot, characters, themes, settings and production values.

- Consider the appraisals of *Hugo* that are published on the *Hugo* website at

<<http://www.hugomovie.com/#reviews>> and nominate which claim best fits your opinion of the film.

- Write your own review of *Hugo*.

Some reviews of *Hugo* have criticised the film for being too long and have questioned whether it will hold the attention of children. Others have suggested that the narrative meanders and becomes tedious. Some critics have questioned the emotional range of Asa Butterfield (the actor who plays Hugo), while others have attacked the slapstick antics of

Sacha Baron Cohen's Station Inspector. One reviewer went so far as to suggest that at seventy years of age, Martin Scorsese is too old to make children's movies.

- Are any of these criticisms valid? Did the film disappoint you in any way?

Working as a class, make a list of key scenes, and then, working with a partner, write a detailed analysis of one of these scenes. Your analysis should answer the following questions:

- What is the scene about?
- Why is the scene significant?
- How does Scorsese use filmic techniques to convey meaning?

Themes are the messages of a story. They are often timeless and universal ideas, and they are usually implied rather than stated explicitly.

- What are the main themes of *Hugo*?
- Choose five words – nouns and adjectives – to describe the following characters: Hugo Cabret, Isabelle, Georges





Méliès, Jeanne Méliès, Hugo's father, the Station Inspector, Uncle Claude, Rene Tabard, Lisette (Emily Mortimer), Madame Emilie (Frances de la Tour), Monsieur Frick (Richard Griffiths) and Monsieur Labisse. Compile the words into class lists and then use the class lists to make a Wordle <<http://www.wordle.net>> for each character. Use the Wordles to write character profiles. Your profiles should draw on direct and indirect evidence from the film.

- Map the characters' relationships with each other. Use words and images to annotate the map and to explain the characters' relationships. The design of the map can reference *Hugo's* visual style.
- Working as a class, make a list of the settings used to tell the story. Indicate which settings are interior and which are exterior. Which settings are the most significant to the story?

'Where do you belong?'

An orphan since his father perished in a fire, Hugo is alone in the world.

What moments highlight Hugo's resourcefulness and resilience? When were you conscious of Hugo's loneliness and vulnerability?

GEORGES [about Hugo]: 'A thief and a liar.'

- Is Georges' assessment fair? What other characters are guilty of theft? What other characters fail to tell the truth?
- At the gala celebrating his life and work, Georges acknowledges that Hugo is 'one very brave young man'. Using this quotation as a starting point, write Georges' speech, in which he offers a detailed explanation of why Hugo deserves such praise.

Hugo's only ally is Isabelle. Like Hugo, she is an orphan, but unlike him, she has found a home with Papa Georges and Mama Jeanne, who love and care for her.

- Why does Isabelle befriend Hugo? Describe their first encounter from her perspective.

ISABELLE: 'Hugo, where do you live?'

- Why does Hugo share the secret of where he lives with Isabelle?

- The Station Inspector is the film's other orphan. Given his past, why is he so intent on dispatching Hugo (and any other urchins roaming the station) to the authorities?

Paris, 1931

Hugo is set in Paris in the winter of 1931. The setting is a heightened version of reality, and the train station is a combination of several different stations in Paris at that time.

- Write a description of Scorsese's Paris.
- Hugo spends much of his time observing the hustle and bustle of the crowded train station, but what do the other characters see? Write a description of the station from one of the other characters' point of view.
- Hugo lives in an apartment enclosed within the walls of the train station. Your task is to recreate the apartment. The format of your presentation, including whether the design is two- or three-dimensional – a poster, an illustration or a model – is up to you.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HUGO AND HIS FATHER (JUDE LAW) WITH THEIR AUTOMATON; ISABELLE AND HER FRIENDS; LISETTE (EMILY MORTIMER) WITH THE STATION INSPECTOR; PAPA GEORGES (BEN KINGSLEY) AT THE TOY BOOTH; HUGO

'It's called an automaton'

Hugo and his father were restoring an automaton at the time of his father's death. Hugo strives to complete the restoration. He steals parts from the toymaker but until Hugo can find a heart-shaped key, the automaton remains motionless.

An automaton is a mechanical human being or animal that historically worked via clockwork mechanisms because it predated electricity. They were originally used as entertainment pieces. Modern automatons, like those used in *Hugo*, are operated by computer programs.

- Why does Hugo want to fix the automaton?
- What risks does he take in his attempts to fix the automaton?

An automaton known as the Draughtsman-Writer was built by Henri Maillardet, a Swiss mechanic of the eighteenth century, and has the largest memory of any such machine ever constructed. Maillardet's automaton was the inspiration for the automaton that features in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo*.

- Watch video demonstrations of Maillardet's automaton and view images of the sketches it can draw at <<http://www.fi.edu/learn/scitech/automaton/automaton.php?cts=instrumentation>>.

HUGO: 'I need it.'

ISABELLE: 'Not unless you tell me why.'

- Why must Hugo use the heart-shaped key to operate the automaton?
- Hugo dreams that he has become an automaton. Can you explain why?

GEORGES: 'Just like you, I liked to fix things.'

- Why didn't Georges destroy the automaton?

'He's got real purpose'

From his vantage behind the huge faces of the station clocks, Hugo watches as others go about their lives with a sense of purpose.

ISABELLE: 'Is that your purpose ... fixing things?'

- What is Hugo's purpose?

ISABELLE: 'I wonder what my purpose is?'

- What is Isabelle's purpose?

Georges' sense of defeat is apparent as he sits behind the toy booth counter.

- Explain the role that the following characters play in restoring Georges' sense of purpose: Hugo, Isabelle, Mama Jeanne and Rene Tabard.

HUGO: 'If you lose your purpose, it's like you're broken.'

- Is Hugo right? Do people need a sense of purpose in life? What sorts of things do you think provide a sense of purpose?
- Write a response that discusses the following:

'*Hugo* is a story about characters searching for a belief in their own worth.'

Your response should be 500–750 words long and draw on evidence from the film.

'Seeing dreams in the middle of the day'

Hugo tells Isabelle that his father always took him to see a movie on his birthday – a pastime that he loved. Isabelle has never seen a movie, though, as Papa Georges forbids the pastime.

- Isabelle is overwhelmed by the magic of the movies. Can you remember your first visit to the cinema? Share your memories with the class.

- Do you think in a world of DVDs and downloads that the movies have lost their magic?

- Why does Hugo love the movies? Do you have a favourite film?

- Many adult cinemagoers will go to see *Hugo* because it is directed by Martin Scorsese. Do you have a favourite filmmaker?

- Isabelle is an avid reader with a vast vocabulary, and introduces Hugo to the bookseller, Monsieur Labisse. Do you like to read? Do you have a favourite book?

GEORGES: 'Films have the power to capture dreams.'

- Hold a class debate that argues the contention that, as Georges says, films have the power to capture dreams.



HUGO AND ISABELLE MARVEL AT THE FUNCTIONAL AUTOMATON



GEORGES IS FINALLY HONOURED FOR HIS BREAKTHROUGH FILMMAKING

'We found out who Papa Georges is'

Georges is a forgotten filmmaker. He has locked away the many painful memories of his glory days. Only his wife Jeanne knows Georges' secret and understands his unhappiness.

JEANNE: 'It only hurts him to remember the past.'

- Why does Georges deny his past?
- Does Jeanne have the same attitude to the past?
- Despite his losses, how does Hugo see his past?

HUGO: 'Could we watch some of his movies?'

Through the use of original footage and recreations in *Hugo*, Scorsese introduces young cinemagoers to some of Méliès' finest films. Many of Méliès' original films can be viewed online by typing 'Georges Méliès' into a YouTube search. Teachers are advised to make a playlist of video clips for students to access.

Older students could also view the documentary *George Méliès: The Father of Special Effects* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXwGN2uSsn0>.

Professor Tabard shows the children and Mama Jeanne the 'one surviving masterpiece'.

- Why isn't Georges angry when he finds that his secret has been discovered?

- Who were some of the pioneers of cinema? Make a Prezi about the filmmaker or filmmaking team that you have selected. Prezi is a web-based presentation application and story-telling tool that uses a single canvas instead of traditional slides. Text, images, videos and other presentation objects are placed on the infinite canvas and grouped together in frames. Create your Prezi at <http://prezi.com/>.

'The invention of dreams'

Martin Scorsese first saw a 3D film, *House of Wax* (André De Toth), in 1953. In interviews promoting *Hugo*, Scorsese has claimed that while *House of Wax* is probably the best 3D film ever made, he believes that Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 *Dial M for Murder* first demonstrated how 3D can be used to tell the story.

- Are you a fan of 3D films? What purpose do you think 3D serves?
- Did you see *Hugo* in 3D? Drawing on the opening sequence as evidence, explain how 3D is used in *Hugo*. Your analysis should begin by mentioning the opening shot and how it swoops over the vast Paris cityscape, and should end by mentioning Hugo peering at the world from behind the number '4' of one of the many station clocks.
- When does Scorsese use flashback? Why? Do these sequences have anything in common?
- In *Hugo*, Scorsese recreates some famous scenes from the days of early cinema. Explain when and why Scorsese makes use of the following scenes:
 - Fred C. Newmeyer & Sam Taylor's *Safety Last!* (1923)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEcTjhUN_7U
 - Auguste & Louis Lumière's *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1896)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dgLEDdFddk>
 - The train scenes from Jean Renoir's *La Bête Humaine* (1938)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QoNL_yf62A

- Scorsese also references the famous Gare Montparnasse railway derailment of 1895 in Hugo's dream. View the iconic photograph of the catastrophe at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Train_wreck_at_Montparnasse_1895.jpg>.

- 'Hugo: A Study of Modern Inventive Visual Effects', available at <<http://www.fxguide.com/featured/hugo-a-study-of-modern-inventive-visual-effects/>>, offers a definitive guide to the film's homages and use of visual effects.

'Happy endings only happen in the movies'

Hugo is a film about mending things that are broken. The idea can also be applied to the characters.

- How many happy endings are there in *Hugo*?

The Invention of Hugo Cabret

Hugo is based on Brian Selznick's illustrated novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. While Selznick wanted to write a story about a child who meets Georges Méliès, he did not know what the plot would be until he read Gaby Wood's nonfiction book *Edison's Eve: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life* (Random House, 2003). *Edison's Eve* is a history of automatons and one chapter is about Méliès' lost collection of automatons.

- Have you read *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*? Do you think that *Hugo* offers an effective adaptation of Selznick's novel? Working with a partner, make a list of how the film differs from the novel. When you have finished, share your observations with the class and spend time discussing why these changes were made.
- Learn more about *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* online at <http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/intro_flash.htm>.

Brian Selznick has written *The Hugo Movie Companion* (Scholastic, 2011). The book offers information about *Hugo*



TOP: HUGO AND ISABELLE LOOK OVER PARIS; ABOVE: A YOUNGER GEORGES WITH HIS CAMERA TECHNICIAN (EDMUND KINGSLEY)

and takes readers behind the scenes. If you enjoyed *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, you might like to read Selznick's *Wonderstruck* (Scholastic, 2011). *Wonderstruck* is an illustrated novel that tells the story of a boy named Ben and a girl named Rose and their thrilling, dangerous and unexpected adventures in New York City.

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Hugo online

The official *Hugo* website can be accessed at <<http://www.hugomovie.com/>>. Students can view trailers, read a synopsis of the story and learn about the filmmakers and cast. Teachers are advised to use the Videos section, in particular the 'Behind the Scenes' and 'Q&A' clips, as well as the Gallery and Review sections of the website to generate classroom activities.

An iPad application for *Hugo* can be downloaded for free from the iTunes store. The application offers students the opportunity to view videos and stills and play games related to the movie.